Hong Kong Adolescents' Attitudes to Democracy and Civic Engagement: How Did the "Post 80s" Generation Become Radical?

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How did the "Post 80s" generation become radical?

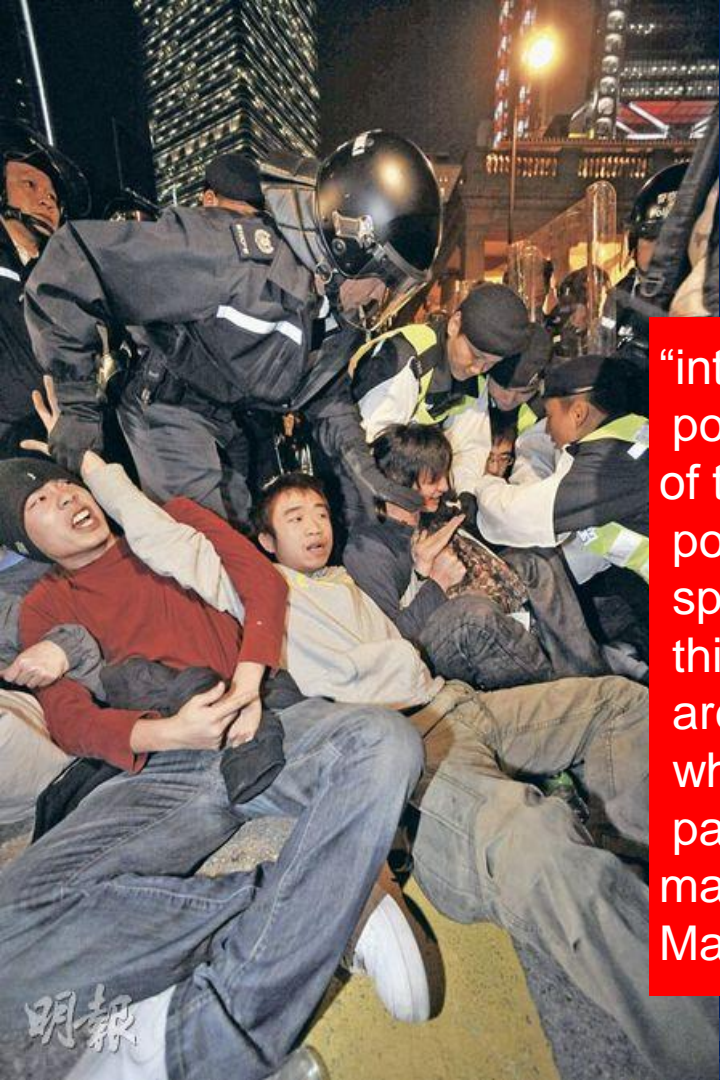Hong Kong Adolescents' Attitudes to Democracy and Civic Engagement

"anti-authority; anti-government; anti-establishment; anti-tradition."

Members of the "post-8s" generation are less happy and more anxious than those of the older generation.

貴價高鐵益官商
基層市民無得亨

The Standard, 18 January 2010

"interest shown by the post-80s generation in various political protests is the product of the extensive use of technology…. 92 percent of the post- 80s generation use the internet daily, with each spending an average of three hours online. "I would think those recent protests against important issues are caused by an empowerment to use online technology, which opens up communication and results in a more participative society where people are readily able to make a difference," (Report of a survey, *The Standard,* 18 March 2010).

http://www.thestandard.com.hk/news_detail.asp?pp_cat=30&art_id=95951&sid=27444583&con_type=1

How did the "post 80s" generation get to be so radical?

Chief Executive Donald Tsang made the government's opinion very clear with his remark that young protestors "violated the core value of our society."

Financial Secretary John Tsang has written two blog posts on the subject. In one of them, he used sociologist Lui Tai-lok's discourse, saying the Post-80s are Hong Kongers who feel frustrated because they have fewer opportunities than their precedents. But he also hinted that they have higher expectations regarding quality of life, and that failure to achieve these goals can lead to frustration.

Meanwhile, Secretary for Security Ambrose Lee says the young activists "seriously undermined" the rule of law in Hong Kong. It seems that in the eyes of those in power, the term Post-80s is similar to "mob."

HK Online: http://hk-magazine.com/feature/post-80s-boom

Research focus and prospects for future efforts

- We know a great deal about the civic attitudes of the "post 80s generation" when they themselves were younger –   as students in Secondary 3. Today's presentation will draw on the attitudes of this generation as they were growing up.

- Does the political socialization literature help us understand how these attitudes and values develop?

- What should be the future of such research in helping is to understand better post-adolescent political socialization?

'Post 80s' @ 15: Civic values and attitudes

- In 1999, a representative sample of Secondary 3 Hong Kong students (n=4997) were surveyed as part of the IEA Civic Education Study (Torney-Purta et al., 2001).

- Secondary analysis of the data from this project has been conducted over the past decade and the current project is one such attempt. What have we learnt?

Expected future political action:

Listed below are several kinds of action a an adult could take. When you are an adult, what do you expect you will do:

(4 point scale – I will certainly not do this (1)….I will do this (4))

M1	Vote in national elections
M2	Get information about candidates before voting in an election
M3	Join a political party
M4	Write letters to a newspaper about social or political concerns
M5	Be a candidate for a local or city office
M6	Volunteer time to help [benefit] [poor or elderly] people in the community
M7	Collect money for a social cause
M8	Collect signatures for a petition
M9	Participate in a non-violent [peaceful] protest march or rally
M10	Spray-paint protest slogans on walls
M11	Block traffic as a form of protest
M12	Occupy public buildings as a form of protest

TABLE 3: *Factor Loadings on Items Relating to Students' Expected Political Actions*

Questions		Importance of:			
		Political Obligations	Political Rights	Voluntary Activities	Protest
M1	Vote in national elections	.779			
M2	Get information about candidates before voting in an election	.770			
M3	Join a political party		.676		
M4	Write letters to a newspaper about social or political concerns		.596		
M5	Be a candidate for a local or city office		.741		
M6	Volunteer time to help[benefit] [poor or elderly] in the community			−.694	
M7	Collect money for a social cause			−.848	
M8	Collect signatures for a petition			−.505	
M9	Participate in a non-violent [peaceful] protest march or rally				−.360
M10	Spray-paint protest slogans on walls				−.731
M11	Block traffic as a form of protest				−.895
M12	Occupy buildings as a form of protest				−.813

Expected future political action

Hong Kong Students		International Sample
Political Obligations	2.86	3.09
Political Rights	2.19	1.41
Voluntary Activities	2.69	2.50
Protest activities	1.90	1.98
Illegal protest activities		Illegal protest activities
Spray paint slogans on walls	1.76	1.91
Block traffic as a form of protest	1.73	1.81
Occupy building as a form of protest	1.72	1.76

An adult who is a good citizen :

	Not important			Somewhat Unimportant			Somewhat important			Very important		
	HK	AU	US	HK	AU	US	HK	AU	US	HK	AU	US
Would participate in a peaceful protest against a law believed to be unjust	10	12	10	30	31	17	43	40	41	17	17	31
Participate in activities to benefit people in the community	3	3	4	12	17	8	61	56	43	25	24	46
Take part in activities promoting human rights	4	7	4	16	25	12	52	45	45	28	24	39
Takes part in activities to promote the environment	4	6	5	14	20	12	48	46	42	35	28	42

'Good Citizen' Scale Scores

Country	Mean Scale Score
International	10.0
United States	10.3
Hong Kong	9.6
Australia	9.3

Descriptive Statistics by Gender for Students' Views on the Attributes of a 'Good Citizen'

|	Questions	Male n=2544		Female n=2452		Critical Values
	For each of these statements, tick one box to show how important you believe each is for explaining what a good adult citizen is or does. An adult who is a good citizen ... *(4 point scale- 'not important' - 'very important')*	M	SD	M	SD	
1	Obeys the law	3.60	.716	3.69	.596	*
2	Votes in national elections	3.03	.732	3.07	.672	
3	Joins political party	2.16	.814	2.11	.720	*
4	Works hard	3.33	.738	3.37	.685	
5	Would participate in a peaceful protest against a law believed to be unjust	2.71	.897	2.65	.845	*
6	Knows about history	2.85	.879	2.80	.848	
7	Would be willing to serve in the military to defend the country	2.39	.947	2.43	.848	
8	Follows political issues in the newspaper, on the radio or on TV	2.81	.783	2.86	.717	*
9	Participates in activities to benefit people in the community [society]	3.00	.726	3.14	.647	*
10	Shows respect for government representatives [leaders, officials]	2.93	.796	3.02	.690	*
11	Takes part in activities promoting human rights	3.03	.798	3.05	.747	
12	Engages in political discussions	2.58	.825	2.55	.771	
13	Takes part in activities to protect the environment	3.07	.835	3.19	.738	*
14	Is patriotic and loyal [devoted] to the country	3.12	.811	3.11	.765	
15	Would be willing to ignore [disregard] a law that violated human rights	2.59	1.055	2.59	1.013	

	Question: What is good and what is bad for democracy? 1=very bad for democracy, 2= somewhat bad for democracy, 3=somewhat good for democracy, or 4= very good for democracy	Hong Kong			
		Male n=215		Female n=236	
		M	SD	M	SD
1	**When everyone has the right to express their opinions freely**	**3.18**	**1.05**	**3.11**	**1.07**
2	**When differences in income wealth between the rich poor are small**	**2.34**	**1.34**	**2.19**	**1.37**
3	**When political leaders in power give jobs in the government [public sector] to members of their family**	**1.78**	**1.16**	**1.71**	**1.11**
4	**When newspapers are free of all government [state, political] control**	**2.55**	**1.26**	**2.27**	**1.32**
5	**When private businesses have no restrictions from government**	**2.16**	**1.16**	**1.80**	**1.27**
6	**When one company owns all the newspapers**	**1.53**	**1.01**	**1.51**	**0.96**
7	**When people demand their political and social rights**	**2.59**	**1.19**	**2.41**	**1.35**
8	**When immigrants are expected to give up the language and customs of their former countries**	**1.62**	**1.09**	**1.44**	**1.04**
9	**When political parties have rules that support women to become political leaders**	**2.52**	**1.26**	**2.41**	**1.44**
10	**When people who are critical of the government are forbidden from speaking at public meetings**	**1.52**	**0.92**	**1.51**	**0.89**
11	**When citizens have the right to elect political leaders freely**	**3.01**	**1.13**	**2.88**	**1.15**
12	**When courts and judges are influenced by politicians**	**1.63**	**1.06**	**1.47**	**1.00**

Question: What is good and what is bad for democracy?	Hong Kong			
	Male n=215		Female n=236	
	M	SD	M	SD
13 When many different organizations [associations] are available [exist] for people who wish to belong to them	2.78	1.23	2.66	1.22
14 When there is a separation [segregation] between the church [institutional church] and the state [government]	1.84	1.36	1.58	1.44
15 Young people obliged to participate in community activities	2.32	1.44	2.26	1.42
16 When a minimum income [living standard] is assured for everyone	2.49	1.38	2.28	1.48
17 When political parties have different opinions [positions] on important issues	2.37	1.29	2.05	1.31
18 When people participate in political parties in order to influence government	2.35	1.30	1.89	1.31
19 When laws that women claim are unfair to them are changed	2.60	1.28	2.65	1.33
20 When all the television stations present the same opinion about politics	1.97	1.22	1.79	1.28
21 When laws violate humans rights	2.03	1.33	1.58	1.30
22 Newspapers forbidden to publish articles critical of the government	1.67	1.16	1.75	1.13
23 When wealthy business people have more influence on government than others	1.65	1.02	1.44	0.98
24 When government leaders are trusted	2.15	1.30	1.94	1.38
25 When people peacefully protest against a law they believe	2.63	1.32	2.41	1.32

Post- 80s understanding of democracy....& then the millennials !

- The question shown previously were administered in 1999.

- We have now used a the same questions with a sample of S3 students in 2009 so we can compare

- What changes have taken place in Hong Kong students thinking about democracy over this ten year period?

Change : 1999 v. 2009
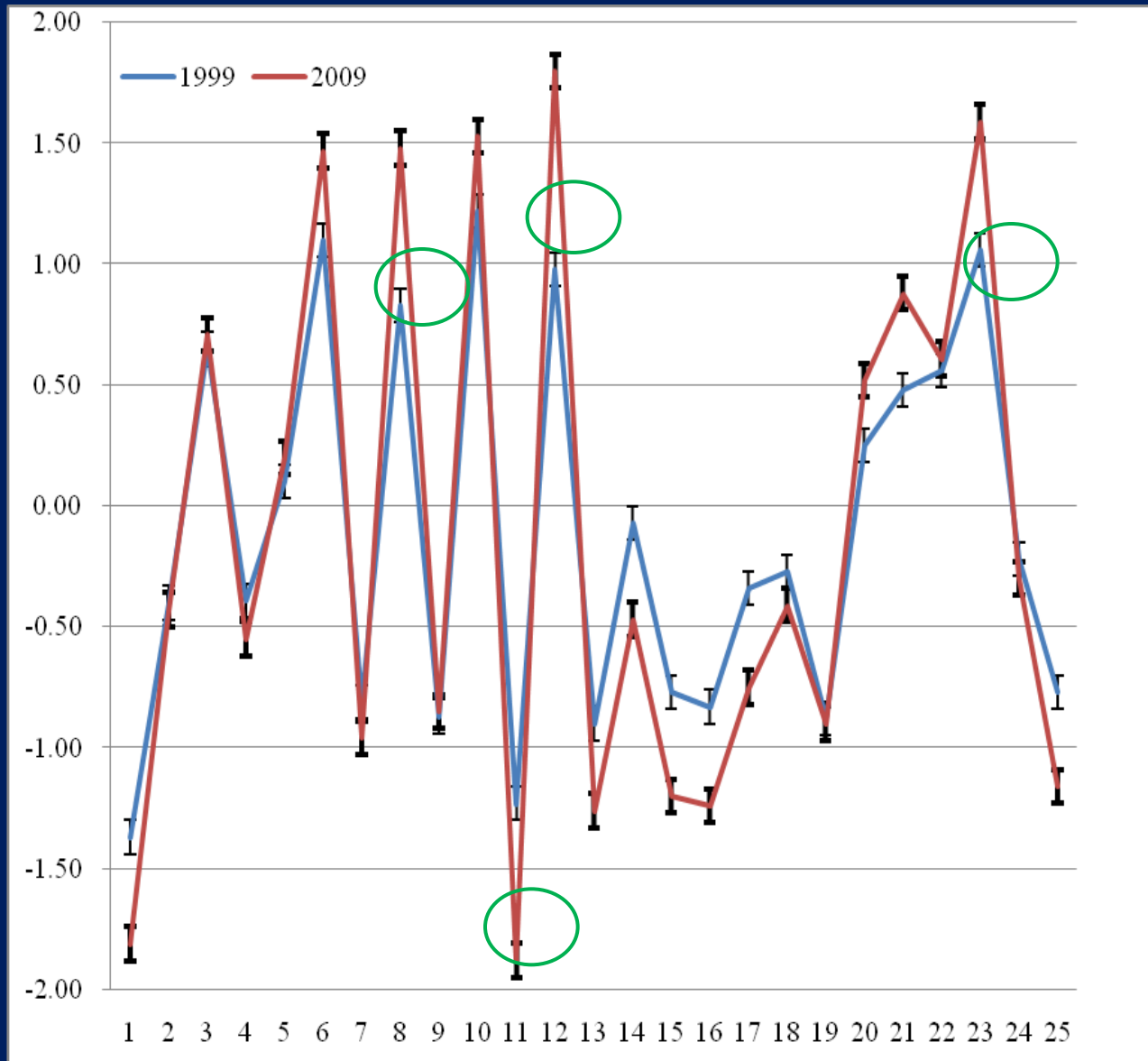
Overall, there was no significant change for the scale as a whole

BUT there was <u>measurable</u> change in 15 items, but <u>substantive</u> change in only 4 items

From Kennedy and Chow (in press)

Change in understanding from cohort to cohort…

Item	1999	
When immigrants are expected to give up the language and customs of their former countries	Seen as 'bad' for democracy	Endorsed by even more students
When citizens have the right to political leaders freely	Seen as 'good' for democracy	Endorsed by even more students
When courts by politic	Seen as 'bad' for democracy	Endorsed by even more students
ss people have government than oth	Seen as 'bad' for democracy	Endorsed by even more students

Hong Kong students both in 1999 and 2009 endorsed a fair and just society – that endorsement has become more obvious and more apparent over time….if this is the motive behind the 'post-80s' radicalism, this data indicates that such motives will only be enhanced in the future

How might some of these results be explained?

- It is usual to look to the field of political socialization : "the process by which the individual acquires attitudes, beliefs and values relating to the political system of which he/ she is a member and to his/her own role as a citizen within that political system" (Greenberg, 2009, p3).

Political socialization…not a new field of study

- "not only gives us insight into the pattern of political culture and subcultures in [a] society, but also locates for us in the socialization processes of the society the point where particular qualities and elements are being sustained or modified" (Almond, 1960: 31).

Figure 1.2 Model for IEA Civic Education Study
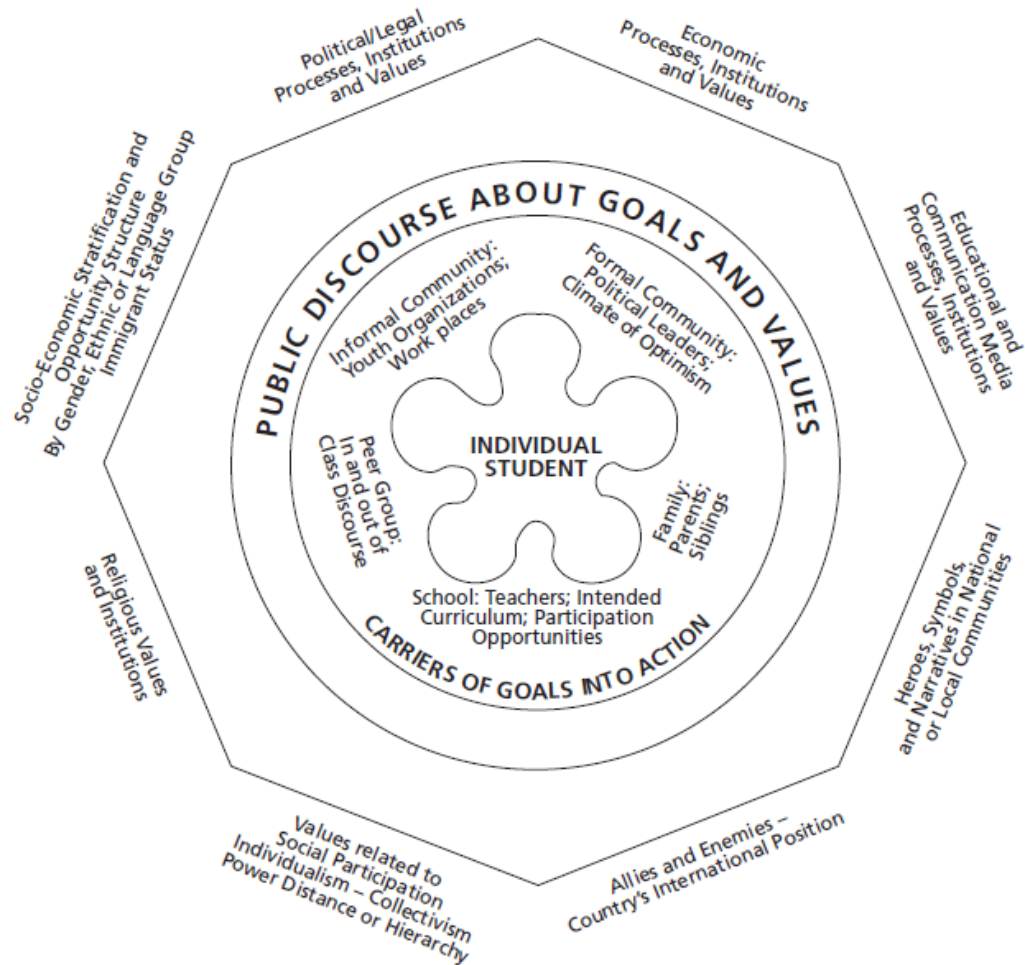
Source:
Torney-Purta, J., Lehmann, R., Oswald, H., and Schulz, W. (2001).
Citizenship and education in twenty-eight countries: civic knowledge and engagement at age fourteen. Amsterdam: IEA.

What about post-adolescents?

- The 'octagon' model is too simple.. Ity fouces on schools and families.. to explain post - adolescent political socialization. Pacheco (2008, p 416) put it his way in relation to the United States:

- "How does a young citizen reconcile the political information learned from *several "simultaneous bases of social experience"* (Huckfeldt et al. 1993, p. 366)? Which context is most important for youth voter turnout, the home, the state, or the locale?"

Research

- Gimple, Lay and Schuknecht (2003) have focused on what they called 'civic environments ' for young people and they have done so by using intensive case studies and ethnographic research.

Research

- Owen (2008) distinguishes between "political engagement"..associated with the norms of duty-based citizenship which emphasizes the formal obligations responsibilities, and rights" and "civic engagement", "working to make a difference in the civic life of communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference" (Ehrlich, 2000: xi). "Those who ascribe to engaged citizenship norms are more likely than others to participate in elite-challenging behavior and protests (Dalton, 2008).

Research

- Flanagan (2008, pp3-4) has pointed out that "historical events that occur during one's youth have a greater formative influence than those same events occurring in one's adulthood." and this gives rise to generational theory. Transmission of political values from one generation to the next cannot be assumed since "generational theorists contend that younger generations have a "fresh contact" with their society, i.e., they see (objectively) similar issues and events from a perspective distinct from adults. "

The way ahead . . .

- What is needed, therefore, is a new approach to understanding political socialization that in particular recognizes that post-adolescents such as the 'Post 80s' (and I would suggest their successors as well) come to their political values in a 'civic engagement' context rather than a 'political engagement' context.

- Importantly, we need to recognize that there is 'generational discontinuity'. They will see the world differently from adults...because the world is different....

The way ahead

We also need tor recognize the significance of context and that broad social issues such as If governments can access to employment, ability to buy a flat, security and safety relating to health and well being etc will influence young people. not deliver these things then young people will seek alternative ways to   secure them.

We cannot discount the political context. In all of the studies I have reported young people in Hong Kong are committed to democracy..and this commitment is deepening. We need to understand that the current context has been created not by democracy but by the lack of it.

A research agenda

- We already have within this Institute researchers for whom political socialization is an important area of research (Greg Fairbrother, Leung Yan Wing, Timothy Yuen, Simon Shen). There are many others interested in citizenship issues. This is a good base.

- We need more theoretical insights (especially taking account of the cultural context) and more studies using mixed methods of research to investigate cohorts of post- adolescents and the sources of their political values and attitudes

Finally

- We need more contact with policymakers so we can see how research can be harnessed towards better policy as well as better theory.

- Does making an impact in society rate as highly a publication in a 5* journal?

References

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Recommendations for Researchers

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